

Here is the companion volume to Martin Doblmeier's film *The Power of Forgiveness*, which was awarded Best Documentary at the third annual Sun Valley Film Festival. The filmmaker, who also helmed *Bonhoeffer*, includes stories on the Amish, 9/11, and peace-building in Northern Ireland, along with interviews with Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel, bestselling authors Thomas Moore and Marianne Williamson, and others.

This edifying and inspirational paperback is written by Kenneth Briggs, former religion editor of *The New York Times*. In our violent world both individuals and nations do not practice forgiveness very often. Payback and revenge are more likely to be chosen as the way to react to any trouble that comes our way. Those who seek to practice mercy in their dealings with other human beings are viewed as weak and unrealistic.

In contrast, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh, and others have modeled the spiritual practices of nonviolence and forgiveness. Their spiritual sense that these alternate approaches bring joy and peace and greater wholeness is now being affirmed by scientific studies showing that individuals who let go of anger and resentment during a process of forgiving are much healthier and happier than those who cling to hate and anger.

In a chapter on "Religion," Briggs explores Jesus' radical personal teaching on forgiveness; the Abrahamic balance of mercy and justice; and Hindu and Buddhist insights into karma, compassion, and conversion. In other chapters, Briggs shines many different lights on forgiveness with pieces on restorative justice; victimhood and forgiveness; forgiving oneself; race and reconciliation in America; weakness, strength, and the challenge of pacifism; and much more. This is a very substantive book, filled with insights that flesh out forgiveness, avoiding both naivete about how difficult it can be and cynical assumptions that say it can be sought but not achieved regularly.

Another strength of this paperback are the powerful interviews.

- *I Am a Witness* by Elie Wiesel
- *Forgiveness as a Field of Inquiry* by Robert D. Enright

- The Complexity of Forgiveness by Thomas Moore
- From Condemnation to Compassion by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Forgiveness in Christian Perspective by Rev. James A. Forbes
- Prisoners of Our Pain by Sr. Helen Prejean

"Forgiveness alone," Kent Nerburn has written, "of all our human actions, opens up the world to the miracle of infinite possibility." The Power of Forgiveness expands our our understanding and appreciation of the value and potential of this crucial spiritual practice. We hope many faith-based groups, libraries, college and university classes, and book clubs will use this book as the foundation for an in-depth study of forgiveness. The documentary is now available on DVD from First Run Features and will air later in 2008 on PBS.

Review by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat
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